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ABSTRACT

This practicum report describes a 12-week project to decrease truancy and improve motivation and academic performance of three students (ages 12 to 18) hospitalized with severe emotional disturbances. A visible and powerful reward system using a menu strategy was developed and implemented in which students participated daily in establishing goals and reinforcers while moving toward increasingly intrinsic motivation. The project also involved a whole language approach to reading, a critical thinking instructional program, and development of a therapeutic bond with at least one teacher. Measurement of reading skills, attendance records, and students' verbal reports were used to evaluate academic achievement, improved attendance, and changed attitudes and behavioral patterns. The constantly visible menu showed goals and rewards on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Additionally, each week focused on a different area, including assessment and orientation, goal setting, self motivation, frustration management, oral language, written expression, reading comprehension, reading for pleasure, self-expression, daily living skills, self-discovery, and evaluation/closure. All students increased attendance notably, improved their reading skills substantially, and appeared to improve their critical thinking skills and attitudes. (Contains 29 references.) (DB)

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MENU STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL BEHAVIOR OF SEVERELY EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED STUDENTS

by

Judith C. Crosby

A Practicum Final Report submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

December 1, 1992

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Abstract

Menu Strategy For Improving School Behavior of Severely Emotionally Disturbed Students

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Descriptors: Emotionally Handicapped/ Severely Emotionally Disturbed/ Secondary Education/ Residential Treatment/ Reading/ Truancy

The classroom management of hospitalized severely emotionally disturbed students, with specific focus on truancy and motivation, was examined. Through development of a visible and powerful reward system, the attendance rates and academic performance of the target group were confronted. The target students participated daily in establishing goals and reinforcers while moving toward increasingly intrinsic motivation. Reading skills provided the academic measure of improved attendance and behavioral patterns.

Evaluation of the results demonstrated that, with the consistent effort of staff, attendance and self-control of classroom behavior were impacted significantly through the implementation strategy. It has been shown that, while academic gains are more gradual in development, truancy, low motivation, and acting out behavior can be reduced. Use of the Menu Strategy as a concrete tool for behavior change is documented as successful with these high risk students in the in-patient environment. The writer provides a sample Menu, attendance rates, and explicit student feedback to support these conclusions.

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CHAPTER I

Background and Community

The educational strategy addressed in the following chapters was initiated in a private psychiatric facility located in a small town on the east coast of Florida. The physical property involved in this plan were the patient units, the activity therapy areas, the school building, the surrounding grounds, and community resources. A 20 bed hall divided into 10 single sex bedrooms housed the residents. These rooms were home to the residential patients during their stay, typically three months to one year.

In addition to the resident rooms on the unit, a large group therapy room was available. The activity areas consisted of an art room, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, and large hospital grounds with access to the river. The student spent three hours per day engaged in activity therapies, including art therapy, recreation and leisure skills groups. The cafeteria, in which both residents and staff ate their meals, was an open, expansive area.

The school area for adolescent patients included a self-contained unit of four classrooms and one office. The classrooms were all 12 feet by 12 feet in dimension, two with windows and two without windows. Three of the classrooms were used for individual and group study and the fourth classroom was used as a resource lab. This lab held a leisure reading area with high interest reading material, two typewriters, two Apple IIE computers, and a printer. These resources were used for educational purposes, both academic and motivational in nature. The use of this room by residents was tied to the behavior modification program applied to school performance.

The staff involved represented a variety of disciplines. Day shift and unit supportive staff consisted of two nurses, two mental health technicians, activity therapists, and family services personnel. The school department consisted of three county school board provided Hospitalized Homebound teachers, and one teacher and one Education Director employed by the facility. The hospital staffing was census driven, with the number of ancillary staff members available dictated by the number of patients. Specifically, inclusive of all hands-on

patient care staff, the staff to patient ratio during school was 1:5. The Education Department ratio of teachers to students, exclusive of supportive staff, was 1:8. Mental Health Technicians were available at all times in the school at a ratio of one per 10 students.

The students hospitalized in the target facility represented a wide variety of populations and psychiatric diagnoses. The students were ages 12 to 18, grades 6 through 12, and beyond, including G.E.D. preparation. The socioeconomic background of the community was generally middle class, with major employers representing a variety of industrial needs. The socioeconomic background of patient families varied tremendously due to the all encompassing scope of psychiatric care. The treatment of patients was paid for by insurance companies, or, as in the case of residents place by government agencies, by the referring state.

The study was conducted by the Education Director of the target facility, working to complete requirements for a Master's Degree in Education, focusing on the Emotionally Handicapped student, with Nova University. This writer completed an undergraduate degree in Education at Colgate University. Prior to the study, the

writer worked within the field for five years, three at a similar facility as a classroom teacher, and two years as the Education Director at the target site.

Problem Statement

The educational needs of students who experience severe emotional disturbance fall outside the typical realm of services and interventions. The acting out behavior of unmotivated, disruptive students is a factor highly damaging to the classroom milieu. The population of emotionally handicapped students examined in this study resided in a long-term psychiatric facility and was, therefore, unique in its educational setting.

Three other residential facilities were surveyed to determine the consistency of the stated problem and the efficacy of intervention strategies. (Appendix A) The teachers interviewed were special education trained individuals teaching in psychiatric hospitals in the same company chain. One of the three also served an administrative position. School site one reported that they had two in-patients who miss more than 50% of the school periods per week; of the two, neither had made significant progress in improving attendance rates.

School site two had five residents who missed more

than 50% of the weekly school programming. A contingency contract with one student had improved her attendance and motivation; the others had shown no improvement. School site three reported that, from a sample of four truant and highly unmotivated residents, three responded sporadically to the reinforcers built into the programmatic level system.

Educators at all three of the related facilities surveyed reported that students resembling the ones on which this study focused are continually present in their programs and create specific educational problems. While all identified general solution strategies involving one to one intervention, none provided a specific implementation plan. No outline was provided by these teachers of a tangible, visible plan devised to interrupt the truant, disruptive, or unmotivated behavior of the most difficult students. All indicated that, while they presently had no formal procedure for confronting these problematic behaviors, such a plan would be welcome. These teachers reported that current strategies were sporadically successful in maintaining the behavior of their students. Those interviewed were reluctant to suggest one behavior management plan which they would

employ with a variety of disturbed students.

Target site teachers and Residential Care Workers also reported that the refusal of students to attend school and disruptive, off-task behavior when present impact their job functioning. (Appendix B) Three of three teachers surveyed indicated that when a student missed school, additional work was created for education staff. Furthermore, lesson continuity was disrupted. All three teachers selected "motivation" and "inattentiveness" as two factors which caused the most significant problems for students at this facility. Two of the three teachers indicated that maintaining student interest through one to one interaction activated a more positive learning environment. All three teachers indicated that a system of rewards was necessary and that more extensive behavior modification would be helpful.

The input of Residential Care Workers was solicited as they provided constant support and teaching assistance in the classroom. All care workers stated that their specific job functions were altered when a student did not attend school or left early. Half of the care workers interviewed cited motivation as a highly problematic issue for students in school. In their role

as supportive staff for teachers, the care workers agreed that students who deviate in attendance and motivation present a challenge which must be faced.

The students on whom this study focused, numbering three, shared many common educational problems. All had been staffed into exceptional education programs since elementary school, all were currently unmotivated to attend school and complete assignments, and all had significant peer interaction deficits. However, the three also had distinct cognitive profiles, various psychiatric diagnoses, and scattered collective school experiences. The three also varied in age and intellectual functioning.

The first student was tenth grader named "George." (fictitious) George was the brightest of the three according to standardized test scores, despite his presentation as a borderline mentally retarded student. George was a large, rather obese 16 year old who had been place in 53 facilities, including psychiatric hospitals and foster homes, prior to his placement at the current facility. His grandparents were the custodial guardians as his parents abandoned him in infancy. George suffered from recurrent depression and expressed suicidal

ideation. This student also exhibited magical thinking and, at times, picked his skin to drink the blood, believing that this would make him powerful. George was generally lethargic and slow moving but became sporadically violent, destroying property and assaulting others. Diagnostically, George had been labelled with Major Depression, Conduct Disorder, and Paranoid Personality Disorder. This student was medicated with Haldol, Lithium, Imipramine, and Thorazine to stabilize his moods, decrease depression, and quell his aggressive tendencies.

Administration of the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised indicated that George's intellectual functioning fell in the average to above average range. His Verbal Scale IQ score was 112, Performance Scale score was 102, and Full Scale was 108. Weaknesses were shown in general fund of information, short-term auditory memory, and work knowledge. These scores were consistent with the administration of the WISC-R two years earlier. George's Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised scores, grade level equivalent, were as follows: Reading-8B; Spelling-7E; Arithmetic-7B. George was, therefore, behind grade level in all areas. The psychologist who

administered the testing recommended a highly structured school environment for George with short term goals and sequential presentation of information.

George's school performance in the past had suffered from extensive truancy, low motivation, and a true affinity for sleeping, unaffected by decreases in medication. (Appendix C) This student had not been retained in any grade due to his exceptional education status and the rescuing efforts of several prior placements. However, George had generally earned C's and D's on all report cards, despite evident ability to achieve higher grades. While in the current facility, George's attendance had been poor, despite strong programmatic links between school and the level system with all related privileges. Excerpts from weekly educational progress notes reported, "...patient continues to sleep in 4 or 5 days a week, missing morning school;" "...patient keeps his head down on the desk for much of the day, requiring multiple redirections to sit up;" "...patient lacks motivation to complete even the briefest assignments;" and, "...patient is sleepy and slow throughout the few school periods he attends."

George exhibited poor peer skills and was not widely

accepted by the other residents due to his sluggish presentation and his unwillingness to invest any energy into the program. George did, however, interact well with adults and hungered for any show of attention or praise from teachers. The only school related activity that excited him was his gift for poetry writing.

The second student, Jordan, (fictitious) presented a different background and set of educational experiences. Jordan's adoptive parents, who retained custody and were highly supportive of him, resided in the state of Kentucky. His biological parents, whereabouts unknown, were abusive to Jordan, both physically and sexually. Jordan was also exposed prenatally to alcohol and unspecified illegal substances. Jordan was referred to the current facility when his oppositional behavior reached uncontrollable proportions and his behavior began to be aggressive toward adults. Jordan, like George, had many prior placements, in day treatment schools, residential homes, and hospitals. His present diagnoses were Separation Anxiety Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Jordan was a tall, handsome 14 year old whose developmental delays and

slight mental retardation were immediately apparent throughout conversations with him.

In interactions with adults, Jordan appeared much younger than his 14 years. This student sought mothering from teachers, regressing to infantile behaviors, and needing much attention. His peer skills were impaired due to his age inappropriate behaviors. His self-esteem was low, a factor compounded by a stutter which worsened when Jordan became frustrated or nervous. This young man had reached puberty since his admission to this facility in August, 1991. Thus his hormonal instincts conmingled with his toddler behaviors. Jordan was medicated with Thorazine and Inderal. Thorazine is a major tranquilizer and was used to stabilize his aggression. Inderal is a drug federally approved as an anti-hypertension medication. Its use with Jordan to reduce the "flight or fight" response and thus have a calming effect was documented as appropriate in the medical literature but was not currently F.D.A. approved.

Jordan missed numerous school days, and when present, often left early. (Appendix C) Jordan tended to give up easily if solutions to school assignments were not readily apparent. This student required excessive

encouragement due to his extremely low frustration tolerance. On the WISC-R, Jordan obtained a Verbal Scale IQ score of 64, a Performance Scale IQ score of 72, and a Full Scale IQ score of 86. This placed him in the Borderline to Mentally Retarded range of intellectual functioning. On the administration of the Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised, Jordan scored below the third grade level in all areas. Excerpts from weekly education progress notes on Jordan included, "...patient refused to attend school most of the week;" "...patient attended one afternoon school session and spent most of the period knocking pencils and papers off the desks; he threw a book and was removed from the class by the technician;" "...patient was unresponsive to redirection;" "...patient seeks negative peer attention by laughing loudly at inappropriate times."

The final target student, Mark, (fictitious) was a 12 year old who presented diagnostically with Conduct Disorder, Undifferentiated Type, Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, Atypical Psychotic Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Unlike George and Jordan, Mark had only two prior placements, one in a psychiatric hospital and one in a residential day school.

His biological mother retained custody of Mark. She feared for his safety and her own when Mark was home due to his impulsivity and destructiveness. Mark seemed unable to modify his behavior for event short periods of time.

Mark's childhood was characterized by neglect and chaos. This student was exposed prenatally to LSD, PCP, cocaine, and marijuana, which may account for his minor neurological impairments in areas such as balance. His acting out behavior was unpredictable and the connection between his actions and the external environment was difficult to find. His thought processes were bizarre and disjointed. Mark was prone to lying and the creation of strange and involved stories which revolved around fantasy, magical thinking, and aliens. Mark also performed bizarre rituals such as flooding the bathroom to "drown the world." He created his own language, which he called "Markette," and which he was willing to explain to certain members of the staff. He was medicated with Haldol to reduce bizarre behaviors and aggression, and Clonodine to counteract the side effects of the Haldol.

When administered the WISC-R, Mark attained a Verbal Scale IQ score of 79, a Performance Scale IQ score of 72,

and a Full Scale IQ score of 74. These scores all fall within the Borderline range of intellectual functioning. His Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised scores indicated that his Reading performance was at the end of the 2nd grade, Spelling at the middle of the 2nd grade, and Arithmetic at the end of the 2nd grade. This young man frustrated easily in the testing situation as in the classroom. Mark became angry if he did not arrive at an answer quickly and if teachers did not respond immediately to requests for help.

In the classroom, Mark's inability to attend to tasks and his decidedly poor peer skills interfered dramatically with academic performance. Mark remained on task for periods of no longer than three to four minutes. This young man was paranoid, suspecting that peers were constantly making fun of him, which they often did as this elicited an enormous response. Mark screamed, whined, and attacked others at random throughout the school day. He slept many of the morning school sessions, a behavior which was related to his medication. Reduction of his Haldol dosage rendered him more alert in the morning sessions but there was then a marked increase in delusions, bizarre actions, and aggression toward

others. Mark's mother had requested that his medication remain stable as his behavior was unmanageable when it was reduced. Mark was removed from the classroom a minimum of once a day, often for attacking a peer or destroying property. (Appendix C) If Mark participated in activity therapy during the morning school session, such as a basketball game with his physician, he was able to stay awake. However, if engaged in academic pursuits during this time, Mark generally fell asleep. This student had bonded with three staff members, for whom his behavior was slightly more on task. When involved in a temper tantrum, however, the staff involved was irrelevant as Mark did not respond to any intervention except physical removal from the environment. Weekly educational notes on Mark reported, "...patient was removed from school four times this week;" "...patient hit peer because he thought peer was looking at him;" "...patient laughed wildly all afternoon stating that his grandfather had been kidnapped by aliens."

The three target students were selected from the available population for a variety of reasons. All presented a compelling educational challenge. Multiple individual interventions had been employed with each,

none of which had been successful for an extended period of time. Treatment plans had been devised for each, aiming specifically at school related behaviors. These creatively implemented plans had been discarded when improvement was not noted. Furthermore, these three allowed for comparison studies as their school behaviors were similar while their diagnoses and intellectual abilities varied. Finally, a utilization review investigation indicated that these three students would remain hospitalized for a minimum of four more months, allowing ample implementation opportunities.

Members of the target group attended and completed assignments for an average of only four school periods per week; they should have attended twenty school periods per week. Therefore, a discrepancy gap of sixteen periods of attendance and participation existed. A unique program needed to be designed to facilitate the participants' attendance and success in school.

Several issues were addressed to ensure the success of the implementation strategy. The write was concerned that the dismal attendance histories of the target students may have prevented full participation in the plan. In addition, all the target students read well

below grade level, a factor which impacted nearly every facet of the school day. The target students also demonstrated poor critical thinking skills. Therefore, critical thinking skills activities were selected and designed to improve these processing abilities. Other treatment issues, such as medication changes, individual and group psychotherapies, physical health, and milieu involvement may have also impacted the success of the proposed strategy. These issues were addressed as they occurred and every effort was made to separate treatment concerns from classroom participation.

Outcome Objectives

This study focused on the in-school behavior of three severely disturbed students. Several elements of their functioning was examined, including academic growth, critical thinking skills development, and improved behavioral control. Objectives at which this project aimed were individualized and specifically measurable in nature.

Objective One: After a 12 week implementation period, the target group would score one grade level higher in Reading, using the Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised, pre- and post- test measurement.

Objective Two: At the end of 12 weeks of implementation, the target group would choose to remain in school and on task for four 45 minute periods per day, as monitored by teacher observation logs and attendance records.

Objective Three: After 12 weeks of implementation, the target group would be able to verbalize the importance of remaining in school through participation in critical thinking skills projects, as documented by a log of teacher interviews and creative verbal and written expression activities.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

Students whose emotional problems interfere with learning comprise a significant portion of our school age population. While an accurate count of these students is difficult to find, estimates suggest that 3% to 9% of this country's school children are currently experiencing learning problems as a direct result of their emotional disabilities. (Hallahan and Kauffman, 1986) Thus, the issue of educating emotionally disturbed individuals is neither isolated or rare. Many of these students find success in school through less restrictive environments in resource classrooms within the public school system. However, some of these students are placed in more restrictive environments as their behaviors and handicapping conditions require more intensive intervention. The challenge of reaching these students is ever present in special treatment facilities as it is in traditional schools.

Such students, however, must be reached, for legal, ethical, and societal reasons. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, formerly Public Law 94-142,

states that emotionally disturbed students will receive a free, public education, regardless of the nature or the severity of the disability. (Heward & Orlansky, 1992) Ethically, these students are entitled to educational services equal to those received by mainstreamed students if they are to become adults with equal opportunities for employment and self-actualization. Finally, the constitution guarantees and society relies upon the active participation of all members in civic activities. Teachers are the individuals best equipped to touch these children and impact their futures. (Chandler and Jones, 1984) Maladaptive school functioning with emotional handicapping components has been approached from a variety of theoretical frameworks. Early researchers defined behavior modification strategies employing a structured learning environment and consistent consequences. (Skinner, 1953;) These strategies continue to hold wide acceptance today as most beginning teacher programs and survey classes start with an examination of behavior modification principles and the application thereof in the classroom setting. (Palladino, 1992) Behavior modification remains a powerful tool when used judiciously, a tool that few

teachers have not employed, either consciously or accidentally, at some time in their teaching experience. More recent educational research drew from these first behavior modification principles to develop more targeted teaching methods. These studies outlined approaches in which teachers designated specific and limited behaviors to change and proceeded in a systematic program to change them. (Talent and Busch, 1985) Related strategies of behavior modification focused on more positive consequencing elements in which students aimed to earn a reward rather than avoid a punishment. Researchers and educators alike have recognized the potential for change when students understand exactly what is expected of them, what behavior they need to eliminate, and what reward they will receive if they succeed. A physiological, or biogenic, approach examines physical processes of emotional disturbances and recommends medical or pharmacological treatment accordingly. (Werry, 1986) For example, the use of Ritalin to treat the symptoms of hyperactivity and attention deficit has gained impetus in the past decade. (Toufexis, 1989) The controversy rages on regarding the use of Ritalin to treat Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, with

teachers and clinicians citing evidence of both its efficacy and its uselessness. Less in question is the use of psychotropic medication for those students who suffer from auditory and visual hallucinations. Teachers and psychiatrist alike agree that the reduction of such medication in highly disturbed students is disruptive to the teaching environment and the learning of the individual student.

The Orthogenic school philosophy requires examination, despite its relative age as compared with more recent strategies, as it was devised in a residential setting. This approach outlined the concept of the "therapeutic milieu" and its relationship to classroom management. (Bettleheim, 1950) The interactive dynamics of all classroom participants, teachers and students, is seen as critical to the cognitive and academic growth of students. Students were expected to develop a sense of community, mutual respect, and cooperative academic and personal growth. It was the role of the teacher to monitor this system of interactive behaviors and link it therapeutically to classroom goals. Today, teachers may translate the concept of the "therapeutic milieu" to their in-school interactions with

students through "relationship enhancement," recognizing that, "...the most disturbed of our pupils have few productive or caring relationships to draw upon." (Diamond, 1992) Other educators have employed tactics such as the "life-space" interview to encourage students to understand their behavior and make more effective choices in the future. (Heuchart and Long, 1980) This cognitive based approach looks to students to demonstrate increased insight into their negative behaviors each time they occur, therefore making better decisions for future, similar situations. These methods tend to translate to more permissive learning environments in which the teacher serves as guide rather than authority. In these classrooms, the teacher serves as the "democratic" leader to learning, leaving the children to develop creative and critical thinking skills independently. (Spock, 1984)

Another widely popular method of classroom management is the establishment of classroom payment for appropriate behavior, using tokens. (Kerr and Nelson, 1983) In a classroom with a developed token economy, students receive play money, chips, or some other form of "token" which represents a value that can later be exchanged for goods or services. This behavior management

strategy requires that students delay gratification for at least a short period of time until the designated purchasing time. The token economy system has given birth to several related methods of recognizing behaviors, either positive or negative, through either granting or removing an assigned symbol. (Walker and Shea, 1991) For example, in one related plan, students had slips of paper placed on their desks at the start of each period. As their behavior remained appropriate, the slips remained on their desks, to be removed if the behavior deteriorated. The students still holding slips at the end of each day were rewarded accordingly. (Walker & Shea, 1991)

Behavior management techniques attempt to synthesize the elements of other models while suggesting specific classroom teaching tools. (Grossman, 1990) Grossman and others have invested considerable research and thought into classroom management strategies for teachers, each addressing conceivable behavioral problems and reasonable responses to these problems. (Grossman, 1990) However, these volumes of teaching tools aim at the less restrictive classroom settings of the public school system, from the regular class to the resource class, and

even to the self-contained Emotionally Handicapped class. These authors did not attempt to extend these solutions to the highly structured environment of the residential treatment setting. While this most restrictive environment had inherent strategies, i.e., ancillary support staff and programmatic rewards and consequences, it also retained many similar classroom difficulties. Little was provided in the research to suggest methods designed for this specific classroom environment.

Specific elements of school performance required close examination. Truancy provided a visible and acute problem to attack. Multiple studies have examined the larger effects of truancy on school systems and methods for increasing large scale attendance. These studies all focused on parental and administrative interventions, incentives for attendance, and punitive consequences for non-attendance. In general, traditional strategies have not impacted truant behavior and truancy rates continue to climb at a tremendous rate.

Other studies have taken a more individual approach with one student and have elicited successful attendance patterns. For example, one such study involved areas businesses in offering rewards for attendance for high

risk students. Another study explored the use of trading stamps within a contingency contract to encourage school attendance. (Zweig et al, 1979) This plan not only demonstrated improved attendance, but also saw an increase in subjects' ability to interact positively with peers. Thus, the literature clearly indicated that, if truancy patterns were to be impacted noticeably, an individual plan with tangible reinforcers must be devised.

While all aspects of academic study are critically impacted by motivation, none can be so readily examined and altered as reading ability. Reading instruction could be approached from a multitude of theoretical positions, from traditional phonics to whole language instruction. The literature based premise of whole language appeals to educators of unmotivated or disturbed students as it requires that reading be, "...real, natural, whole, sensible, interesting, and relevant...," and that it, "...belongs to the reader and has social utility." (Goodman, 1986) Whole language approach has been successful in creating avid readers whose performance in all reading related subject areas improved significantly. (Newman and Church, 1990; Altwerger et al, 1987;

Burchby, 1988) Literature based reading instruction maintains the input of the student in their learning as the choice of reading material lies with them and not in a pre-determined reading list or text. Literature based reading strategies have been documented as highly successful with older students who have reached junior and senior high as poor readers. (Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989)

In addition to the stated problems, the target students, like many other students, experienced deficits in their ability to think independently, draw conclusions based on evidence, and problem solve creatively. Existing curriculum tended to expect students to develop critical thinking through its inclusion in content instruction. (Black, 1987) The failure to provide activities aimed specifically at the development of creative thinking skills left students bereft of strategies by which to process information and problem solve creative solutions. The implementation of critical thinking skills training must proceed from a recognition of elements lacking in content area material:

> "Since education seems to concentrate on left hemisphere thinking activities, and since it is the right hemisphere which is needed for seeing patterns and making generalizations,

> this could well be the reason that students seldom automatically transfer learning even within the same subject areas, let alone from one subject to another or to everyday life situations. Furthermore, it appears that either the right hemisphere or the connecting link between the two sides of the brain also get heavy use during all of these kinds of thinking; drawing reasonable inferences, reasoning by analogy, recognizing cause and effect (and distinguishing these from events that are merely close in time), spatial perception, recognizing relations, discovery, creativity, and asking and answering such questions as, "What would happen if...?" and, "What might be done about...?" and, "What might have been the matter." (Harnadek, 1979:1)

Thus, the development of creative critical thinking skills are often currently absent and simultaneously imperative. Within a target group so lacking in insight and ability to employ school survival skills, the need for a critical thinking skills program was apparent.

The review of the literature, in conjunction with data from the three related facilities, supplied several possible alternatives for addressing the present problems. From the literature, the Orthogenic model and the approach suggested by Long emphasizing self control in a permissive environment was rejected as the severity of these students' emotional disturbance required external control. Programs suggesting negative consequences for behavior or punitive actions for non-

attendance did not appear promising as the target students, like most emotionally disturbed students, did not respond favorably or productively to negative motivators. Token economies, used as a classroom management technique, were flawed in their prevention of intrinsic motivation. Token economies could also, "...lead to a student extortion racket: give me a verbal message (or some candy or gold stars), and I won't drive your nuts." (Ohanian, 1982:137) Biogenic interventions were in place as the target students were already medicated. However, this strategy alone could not be relied upon as these students had long been medicated to address their emotional lability, with no noted improvement in school functioning. Overall, any model focusing on attainment of abstract self-concept goals would not produce fruitful results due to the concrete nature of the thinking processes of the target students.

Solution Strategy

Components of several models did provide a useful framework for the solution strategy. These specific elements were named in concept by the teachers contacted from three related facilities. All mentioned the need for reinforcers, a detail which was included for the plan

to succeed. All three also recognized the importance of relationship building for a positive classroom environment, which was to be linked to the therapeutic milieu of Bettleheim. Personalization of the teacher with the individual student while maintaining a stimulating environment was a critical element. (Adelman, p. 105) In addition, the issue of student ownership of learning experiences was alluded to by two of the three teachers surveyed as it was in the literature. (Spock, 1984) Clearly, students must feel that they have choice in their learning activities and that school activities relate to real life. The teachers surveyed also reported the crucial element of one to one attention for the disturbed student. These tenets alone, however, were not sufficient to impact the behavior, attendance, and academic growth of the targeted students. A vast collection of so structured intervention plans had been initiated, at this facility and others, in attempts to address these students' educational needs and improve their levels of functioning. These plans had been entirely unsuccessful. Those which lead to better school related performance proved effective for only limited periods of time.

The solution strategy, therefore, for the presenting problem was structured on a behavior management plan emphasizing positive reinforcement while capitalizing on a therapeutic bond with at least one teacher. A structured behavioral program with short compliance intervals was indicated if periods of achievement were to be increased. Rapport with the staff involved was essential as the target students tended to be suspicious of authority figures. The missing element that supplemented these facets incorporated the need for a visible, tangible system of goals and reinforcers. The Menu Strategy for Improving School Attendance and Performance of Severely Emotionally Disturbed Students provided this missing link. In this strategy, the target students met with the identified teacher, the writer of this project, and together devised goals and rewards for the coming week. The goals were academic and behavioral in nature with an element of critical thinking skills development. The teacher had pre-selected goals and encouraged the selection of these goals by the student. Several critical elements defined the Menu Strategy, including rewards, motivation, reading skills, and critical thinking. The reward component involved the

selection of both short and long term rewards for the target students and the implementation of daily payment for positive participation. The process of increasing students' motivation and attendance was tied directly to the reward component as the students were reinforced only for specified attendance patterns. The reading strategies of whole language were incorporated into the plan as the target students chose leisure reading materials as part of the completion of the Menu.

The Critical Thinking component was incorporated into both the rewards and the academic tasks, through content area material and critical thinking skills assignments. Critical thinking activities aimed to develop independent processing abilities and the use of learning in the activities of daily living. Specifically, the Critical Thinking component engaged the target students in exercises which proceeded through the elements of cognition, evaluation, selecting, ranking, and explaining. Sample assignments focused on similarities and differences, sequencing, classifying, making analogies, and creative problem solving. These activities targeted creative thinking skills in general and the issues of school related motivation and truancy

in particular. Students progressed through inductive and deductive thinking exercises while developing insight into the need to remain in school and the daily living advantages to a successful educational career.

All element of the plan, including goals, rewards, and academic pursuits, were documented on a menu-like form which was visible to the students throughout all school periods to provide visual reinforcement. (Appendix H) The Menu Strategy molded the strategies successfully in place at related facilities with components from the literature to create a high impact program for the educational needs of severely disturbed students. The Creative Critical thinking segment enabled the target students to incorporate the plan into their future academic pursuits regardless of apparent rewards.

CHAPTER III

Method

The behavioral and emotional problems of the students studied in this project had interfered with their academic, cognitive, and personal growth. This interference was so severe that only a drastically individualized intervention plan could affect any change. Multiple strategies had been utilized in the past, drawing from the available literature and from fellow educators. None of these created any long term improvement. This chapter serves to outline a new intervention scheme, one which targeted specific behaviors and linked them to specific rewards.

Procedure

This study aimed to achieve the stated objectives by connecting specific academic and behavioral goals to tangible rewards, in a precise and visible manner. A Menu was designed which allowed for the teacher and the student to identify and record daily and weekly goals, and consequent daily, weekly, and monthly rewards. (Appendix H) Student input in both areas assured greater

compliance and enthusiasm for the plan. The Menu was completed each Monday morning, individually with each of the target students. It was then displayed in a prominent place near the students' classrooms. At the end of each day of successful goal attainment, the students earned the reward selected by them, for that day. If the student proceeded positively through the week, they earned the weekly reward. And, following four weeks of appropriate completion of school assignments and attendance goals, the students earned the monthly reward, grander in scope than either the daily or weekly rewards.

Comments on student participation and growth were recorded by the writer each day on the menu sheet itself. The writer also drew conclusions at the end of each week about the students' progress. Students were encourage to brainstorm solutions to the problems encountered in the course of the project. These suggestions were included in the future completion of the Menu.

Resources

Many resources, both human and material, were involved in the implementation of this strategy. This writer was involved personally with all elements of the implementation plan. The writer administered appropriate

assessment tools including pre-test and post-test achievement measuring instruments. The writer was also involved a minimum of one hour per day instruction time and provided or arranged for the provision of all selected rewards. The author was the sole participant, with the students, in the identification of reinforcers and weekly goals and engaged the students in the reading component of the implementation strategy.

In conjunction with the role of the writer, several ancillary departments and individuals were involved with the implementation of this plan. Three classroom teachers provided instruction to the target students for the daily school periods during which they were not engaged by the writer. These periods were identified within each teacher's area of expertise, and the target students were monitored for attendance and participation in these classes. They also spent time with Activity Therapy personnel who filled portions of the reward segment of the implementation plan. The assistance of other ancillary personnel was solicited at the target students' request regarding rewards, contingent on successful completion of goals. For example, one target student requested to play basketball with his attending

psychiatrist as a reward. This request was honored as the student fulfilled the components of the Menu.

In general, the materials involved fell into two categories, those required for goal achievement and those required for the reward component. The goal related element included reading instruction materials with a focus on a literature based approach. The students selected topics which were of interest to them and materials were accessed to address these interests. Weekly, the target students provided guidance as to what reading materials drew their interest.

While participating in the regular classroom activities, the target students were engaged in the same curricular goals as the other students. Individualized modifications were made for them to ensure that work was ability level appropriate. They were expected to invest in these activities with the other patients as the regular classroom teachers chose low frustration, high interest assignments. All academic area materials were accessed through the in-house library of county adopted texts and other books, the public library system, Florida Diagnostic Learning Resource System, personal collections of teachers, and media publications, i.e., a wide variety

of magazines, newspapers, and comic books.

The reward component of this project varied from week to week and student to student and was not predetermined with the exception of logical limits. Tangible rewards included items from sodas and snacks to CD's and trips to the mall. One target student named a fishing excursion as a monthly motivator and worked diligently to earn it. The target students were encouraged to choose, within reason, those rewards, both tangible and intangible, which would be the most rewarding for them. A reinforcement assessment was administered to determine likely rewards. The staff involvement in this project required monetary commitment. However, the time commitment proved to be far greater. Students named many rewards which required staff time, such as playing computer games, jogging, and other activities which sought the individual attention of staff. Material rewards proved at times to be costly, and students were encouraged to select rewards creatively to reduce this expense. For example, one student shifted his selection of rewards from material items to time in the facility weight room.

Monitoring

Throughout the implementation of this plan, the critical tasks aimed at the development of cognitive skills, consistent motivation, and insight. Cognitively, the target students focused on the improvement of language tasks, specifically reading. This goal was sought through extensive practice of current skills as well as the acquisition of new reading strategies. The target group also invested time and energy into the development of writing skills which supported the focus on reading. Reading skills tasks emphasized increasing sight word vocabulary, basic comprehension, and determining meaning from context clues.

The motivational element was more objective in nature and more narrow in scope. The target students aimed to attend all daily school periods and remain in school for the designated length of time. Daily and weekly rewards were tied directly to the school attendance portion of the goals.

The critical thinking component of this proposal involved insight development, an element both subjective and difficult to measure. The target group participated in a variety of activities which focused on the

development of thinking skills as they relate to ability level and specific problem areas. The target group engaged in processes which encouraged them to think positively about education, reading, and themselves as related to learning activities. The target group participated in assignments, both individual and group, which aim to develop problem solving abilities and creative thinking skills.

The end results of the cognitive and motivational elements of this proposal were less complicated to monitor and measure for success than the critical thinking element. The target group was assessed in reading strength prior to implementation using the Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised, Form A, which was administered after implementation using Form B. During implementation, the target group was monitored daily and weekly for improvement in reading fluency, vocabulary recognition, and reading comprehension. This evaluation was both formal and informal. Fluency and vocabulary usage were monitored through teacher evaluation during the one on one reading time with the writer. Content area comprehension was monitored through questions provided by content area materials and teacher made

evaluation tools. All of the target students' writing samples were save in a portfolio in chronological order to allow comparison throughout the survey.

The motivational component of the implementation plan proved to be the most simple to monitor and evaluate. An attendance log tracked the target students' attendance and the length of time they remained in school. This information was gathered each period of the school day and plotted weekly for comparison purposes.

The critical thinking element of the proposal was monitored through activities and assignments focusing on three specific elements of a critical thinking model. Affective education and assignments, both oral and written in nature, engaged the target students to process the need for school and developing critical thinking skills. Activities were developed that the target group completed at the beginning and the end of the implementation plan and compared for progress in the critical thinking process. While this comparison serves as a more subjective evaluation method, clear objectives will be named which will delineate progress or lack thereof. Their participation in the critical thinking activities was also monitored for interest, enthusiasm,

and demonstration of abstract thinking about a variety of problems and topics. As with the cognitive and motivational components of the implementation plan, the critical thinking skills element was monitored by this writer in conjunction with coordinating staff.

The scheduled school day consisted of four periods totaling three and one half hours daily, or seventeen and one half hours per week. The target students participated in the implementation plan for the scheduled hours for a period of twelve weeks. Time devoted to the reward phase of the strategy was determined by the nature of the selected rewards. The proposal was implemented Monday through Friday throughout the twelve week period.

Time Line

Several specific components were common to each week of the implementation period. Each week, the target students met with the writer to complete the Menu which identified goals, both academic and behavioral in nature, to be pursued that week. Students participated in all academic periods held for fellow residents and were expected to maintain their individualized course of study. Each target student participated in group and independent reading activities every day of the

implementation time. And, each target student was required to participate in all insight oriented educational activities conducted within the framework of the educational program. Creative Critical Thinking skills activities were assigned and completed each week, both individually, in groups, and with staff. In addition, the following applications were conducted with the target group.

Week One--Assessment and Orientation: Students were assessed to determine reinforcers for entire implementation plan; (reinforcers were re-evaluated every week for effectiveness). This writer evaluated with target students their attendance records at prior placements and since admission to current placement. The project was explained to the target students and their cooperation and enthusiasm were enlisted. The critical thinking component was introduced to the target students. The first Menu was completed by the writer and the target students individually, identifying goals and rewards for each day, the week, and the month. All three target students selected, with discussion and encouragement from the writer, the goal of attending school every day of the week. George attended only Monday, refusing to get out

of bed for the rest of the week. Jordan attended four days the first week, and his weekly summary stated, "Jordan attended every day except Wednesday, earned daily rewards, and planned excitedly the rewards for the following week." Mark attended three days this week. In this first week, as in the subsequent weeks, Mark was diligent in his pursuit of the daily reward, often regardless of his performance in school.

Week Two--Goal Setting: In conjunction with the development of the Menu for the week, the writer discussed with the target students the process of setting realistic goals. Jordan continued the goal from the prior week of attending each day. George and Mark narrowed their goal to attending school two full, consecutive days. George attended three days, two consecutive; Mark two days, not consecutive. Jordan attended Monday and Tuesday, engaging in an aggressive argument with a peer on Tuesday afternoon, and not returning to school for the rest of the week.

The writer began to allot one period per day with the target students individually to focus on reading skills. Each target student selected a leisure reading book. Jordan selected <u>James and the Giant Peach</u> by Roald

Dahl. Mark chose Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstien. George chose Bigfoot by Elwood Baumann. Each student demonstrated initial excitement regarding the pursuit of leisure reading.

Week Three--Self-Motivating: The subject of self-motivating techniques was introduced to George and Jordan. Each attended three full days of school. Mark continued to demonstrate extensive acting out behavior in the classroom and remained concrete in focus. Discussion of self-motivation was unsuccessful and inappropriate for Mark at this time, as he attended only one full day. All target students engaged in discussions about what motivates them to do well in school. This dialogue occurred in school with Jordan and George and on the unit with Mark. Mark verbalized that he likes to earn a reward, especially attention from adults, when he has a good day in school. Jordan identified external reinforcers and demonstrated little insight into self-motivation. George was able to complete a motivational questionnaire more abstractly. For example, George answered the question, "The person who motivates me most to do well in school is..." with "me." Teacher initiated contact remained high at this time. The writer discussed

with the target students their responses to the self-motivation questions, encouraging them to look internally for motivation.

Week Four--Frustration Management: Students completed a journal entry each time they became frustrated in school. The entry addressed the antecedent which caused the frustration, their reaction, and possible alternative reactions. Activities addressing truancy were conducted with the target students. Students were asked to generate a list of reasons for truant behavior and problem solve consequences and possible solutions to this pattern of behavior. Mark indicated that his relationships with peers cause him to be truant. Specifically, he stated that he is truant because, "People call me names; too many people provoke me; and my behavior is bad." Jordan stated, "I don't like the work; I am bored; and I hate junior high." George stated that he misses school because, "I am tired; I don't feel like it; It's hard for me to go." Target students were asked to write about the importance of remaining in school. When asked what the consequences of truancy are, Mark stated, "Time-outs; I get mad and kick people; and I get annoyed." Jordan saw long term

consequences, specifically, "I'll get bad grades; fail eighth grade; and have to go to the barn." The latter refers to his parents practice of sending him to the barn to be spanked when he missed school. George also recognized the academic effects of missing school, reporting, "I won't pass or graduate; I'll get behind; and I won't be able to go to college."

Each of the target students was able to brainstorm solutions to truancy, albeit difficult solutions to implement. For example, Mark stated that he should ignore peers and give himself a time-out. Jordan and George took a simplistic approach stating that they should, "Just do it." George and Jordan attended four days this week. Mark's behavior continued to be bizarre and he was removed from school by mental health technicians within the first few minutes of school three days of the week. He attended school the remaining two days, requiring multiple time-outs and much leniency.

Week Five--Oral Language: The target group engaged in additional reading aloud activities. One target student chose selections of his own poetry to recite at a talent show held for parents. Oral expression games were conducted, both in school and through the Activities

Department. Jordan and George attended every day of the week and responded with enthusiasm to the oral expression games, including an activity in which students identified actions that indicate listening. Mark attended one day of the week. The writer attempted to engage Mark in oral expression activities in the day room on the unit. However, Mark had difficulty with these less structured activities and was unable to identify signs of active listening.

Week Six--Written Expression: The target group attempted a formal writing assignment each day. Sample writing assignments included, "Write yourself a letter of encouragement; What questions could you ask in an interview?; Write about how you are alike others and different; and, Write about your worst day ever and how it could have been better." Ultimately, part of the assignment involved proofreading the work from the day before. Target students began a daily journal which they shared with education staff and therapists at their discretion. History exercises explored the importance of the written word. Jordan attended five days; George, four; and Mark, three.

Week Seven--Reading Comprehension: Target students

focused on activities which aimed to improve reading comprehension strategies, including using context clues and reading for main idea. Target students were given reading assessments to determine progress in reading strategies and comprehension. It was determined that more activities aimed at comprehension were indicated. Students were introduced to techniques of predicting and summarizing. They engaged in aloud reading activities with the writer using leisure reading books of their choosing. Mark completed assignments through three days of the week, while George and Jordan were present for all five. Informal evaluation, which the writer continued at this time, examined specifically each target student's participation.

Week Eight--Reading for Pleasure: Target student were taken to the library and to a book store. Each was asked to identify three or more areas of interest. With encouragement, George named poetry, medieval history, and baseball as areas of interest. Mark stated that he is interested in reading about Bart Simpson, and with much pressing, he stated an interest in science. Jordan stated that he is interested in reading about horses, basketball, fishing, and pool. Instead of each target

student purchasing a magazine subscription, each was asked to select one from the existing in-house magazine library to read at a designated weekly time. George and Jordan repeated their attendance of week seven, attending every day. Mark's attendance deteriorated by one day as he attended only Monday and Tuesday.

Week Nine--Self-Expression: The target group began to write their autobiographies. Discussion of personal needs proved to be too abstract. Consequently, each student was asked to name three future educational goals. George named graduating from high school, going to college, and finding a friend. Mark's goals were creative and one was humorous in its lack of realism. He stated he would like to, "Learn to read well; skip a grade; and teach someone something." Jordan stated that his educational goals are to, "Finish pre-algebra; not get mad; and not get upset." They were also asked at this time to share their impressions of the project thus far. Jordan and Mark focused primarily on the achievement of the rewards and remained highly positive about the project. George stated that he felt that the strategy had been helpful to him, but he reported concerns about what would happen when he returned to regular school.

George attended every day of the week. Jordan became agitated in the first part of the school day on Wednesday when the mental health technician refused to let him complete his work on the computer. He became explosive and returned to the unit to finish his school work. Mark attended three days, but his continual peer conflicts caused him to be restricted to the unit for the remaining two days of the week.

Week Ten--Daily Living Skills: The target group participated in vocational skills projects such as the completion of job applications, money management, and organizational skills. They were asked in activities to related them to school skills, especially reading. George continued to be highly motivated to earn his rewards, and, therefore, had perfect attendance this week. Mark was unable to remain in school on Monday, but was consistently on-task for the rest of week ten, with the supportive interventions of time-out and earning points and stickers. Jordan missed school Tuesday of this week because he became agitated during the first class of the day, reading.

Week Eleven--Self-Discovery: The target students were asked to name several personal strengths, especially

school related. George stated that he is smart and can learn when he tries. He also recognized his gift for poetry as a school related strength. Mark stated that he is smart, nice, and takes time-outs well. Jordan reported that physical education and basketball are his school related strengths. He also had the insight to recognize that his ability to bond with teachers is helpful for him in school. The students were asked to elaborate on the educational goals set in Week Nine. They completed guided writing assignments about their future and their hopes for their education. The attendance goal culminated for Mark and Jordan in week eleven, both attending all week. George's behavior deteriorated significantly when he was informed of his pending discharge date. He slept for much of the week and refused to leave his room when he was awake.

Week Twelve--Evaluation and Closure: The target group evaluated their portfolio of writings and discussed their perception of their progress. They were rested by the writer using the Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised. Jordan obtained a raw score of 32, an increase of eight raw score points from his pre-implementation score of 24. This score places his reading ability at the end of the

category Beginning of Third Grade. George obtained a post-implementation raw score of 54, a four point increase from his prior score. This increase places him at the End of the Eighth Grade, less than one grade level higher than his pre-implementation score. Mark gained two raw score points on this second administration of the WRAT-R. This raw score of 25 leaves him in the Below Third Grade category.

The target students presented an oral and written summation of what they achieved throughout the process. They shared with the entire facility student population what they had done throughout the implementation. Jordan and Mark attended all five days of this final week of implementation. George attended three days, primarily to prepare for discharge and bid good-byes to education staff.

Modifications

Modifications were made in the implementation strategy to make possible the attainment of the attendance goal. The students were encouraged to use time-out periods of five to 15 minutes within the school area to regain composure when frustrated or agitated. This reduced the likelihood of students escalating

behaviorally and returning to the unit. It also became necessary to employ staff verbal intervention techniques to provide educational incentives for remaining in school. Students were reminded repeatedly of the Menu contract and their reward for that particular day.

Additional modifications involved the reward component strategy. It became evident in Week Two that it was necessary, particularly with the youngest member of the target group, to intersperse elements of the daily reward throughout the school day. Expecting this student to delay gratification until the last period of the school day proved unrealistic. Rewards shifted from material items to individual attention or special privileges by Week Three, when expenses escalated. Finally, the students were allowed to earn the weekly reward following three consecutive days of complete participation. This procedure was instituted, following Week Four, to prevent students, who having missed school on Monday, from missing the remainder of the week since the reward was already unobtainable.

The final revision involved the inclusion of the entire facility population in elements of the program. Classmates of Mark, witnessing his participation in the

implementation plan, expressed a desire to participate, following the Fifth Week. Therefore, class Menus were developed, independent of the one developed for the target student, but containing similar ingredients. This proved to be an effective classroom management strategy for the classroom teacher.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the described process was conducted continually throughout the implementation period. Reading abilities were monitored through teacher observations and assessment daily, with formal evaluation occurring at Week 12. Attendance and motivation patterns were noted daily and recorded on the Menu itself as well as on the teacher log.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The objectives of the present study, numbering three, must be examined individually in an effort to determine the success of each. Reading proficiency, attendance, and school insight related critical thinking skills each have independent measurement variables to evaluate. While the attainment, of lack thereof, of each influenced the progress in the other two areas, results in the three areas vary significantly.

Following 12 weeks of implementation, the WRAT-R was re-administered by the writer to the target group utilizing test Form B. In reading proficiency, one student, Jordan, reached the stated objective of improving reading skills by one grade level. Jordan also demonstrated an increased willingness to pursue reading as evidence by repeated and regular requests of staff to reach with him. Improved fluency in reading was evident as he was more consistently able to determine unknown words, evaluate meaning from context cues, and generate discussion on main ideas. Jordan also demonstrated

considerable improvement in his ability to remember and repeat story details as evidence by content areas questions. This student's considerable investment in the Menu Strategy, including the attendance component, surely influenced the outcome of the reading objective. Jordan was also most able to identify reading material of interest to him.

The remaining two members of the target group, while achieving slightly higher raw scores on the second administration of the WRAT-R, did not attain one grade level improvement in reading performance. As will be seen with the attendance component of the strategy, George and Mark did not engage in the reading skills tasks with the consistency or energy of the first target student. Neither could readily name multiple reading titles of interest to him. Mark refused to continue with each of his selected leisure reading choices beyond the first few pages. Logically, the development of ancillary written language skills corresponded to the improvement of reading skills. Only Jordan, who reached the reading goal, indicated improved writing ability as measured by content area and creative writing assignments, as well as components of the critical thinking skills objectives.

Attendance proved to be, both objectively and subjectively, the most conclusively achieved goal. All members of the target group increased previous attendance notably. The pattern of improved attendance varied for each. The objective of 100% attendance was reached by Week 12, by all members of the target group, with one modification. (Appendix D) One target student, George, upon learning of his pending discharge date, immediately following Week 12, deteriorated behaviorally in all elements of his therapeutic program, including school. Therefore, he achieved the stated attendance goal at Week Five and maintained it for four of the following weeks. However, Weeks 11 and 12 saw a decrease in his attendance due to extremes in his emotional functioning. (Appendix E)

Of the remaining two target students, the attendance of Jordan improved at a consistent rate, beginning at Week Three, reaching the stated objective by Week Six and remaining there until Week 12, with one week's exception. (Appendix F) The third target student, Mark, demonstrated sporadic improvement in attendance, reaching the objective by Week 12. (Appendix G) The eventual success of this student was augmented by a coinciding

Week 11 change in doctor.

The critical thinking objective, most subjective to measure, was achieved, at least superficially, by all members of the target group. All members completed with accuracy critical thinking activities assigned on a weekly basis. Each participated actively in the affective education exercises aimed at development of school related insight. Each was able to verbalize reasons for prior truancy and to project future difficulties if his current attendance pattern continued.

The attainment of the critical thinking objective came into question when the target students were expected to relate a school thinking skills to a new or unfamiliar situation. The transfer of thinking strategies was unsuccessful as these students remain concrete in their thinking. Students did, however, participate in the development of specific critical thinking strategies, such as brainstorming, problem solving, and decision making. All these activities were ultimately aimed at the prevention of truancy and an increase in school related behavior control and motivation.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The Menu Strategy introduced in this study will continue at the target site, with alterations in form and function. Generalized use of the tool has been initiated with one class, containing a limited daily reward component. Its use continues with the two target students who remain in the facility. In addition, several other students have been identified who may benefit from this approach. For students within this population indicated as high risk for truancy and low motivation, the implementation of this strategy will be considered. The linking of all academic areas to this strategy will occur as necessary.

The writer conducted inservice training will all facility teachers throughout the implementation period. These teachers currently participate in the development of the Menu for additional students for whom they feel it would be beneficial. They have been encouraged to implement this procedure with any or all of their students. Resources have been supplied to assist with

this process.

The Menu Strategy has been introduced to other residential facilities within the corporate chain, and the writer has offered consulting services, via telephone, to the facilities with staff dedicated to the progress of the individual student. Through the county Exceptional Education office, the plan has been shared with county-wide teachers of severely emotionally disturbed students. The plan may prove most effective, however, within the small, individualized environment of a residential facility.

Future use of the strategy may focus more specifically on academic goals, including improvement in standardized test scores and development of individual skill areas. The writer recognizes the limitations of the WRAT-R in assessing the complex nature of reading skills and suggests an alternative evaluation tool for future assessment of this strategy. Teachers employing the Menu Strategy may consider its use with larger populations and limit its individual use. Class-wide operation of the plan may prove effective with management of the Emotionally Disturbed class. Regular classroom teachers may also find this strategy effective for improving the

on-task and motivated behavior of their students.

The written has learned from the current study the surfeit of options for improving school behavior and the deficit of actual on-going strategies at the present facility, as well as others. This plan has served the target population, both teachers and students, as a point of departure for the development of future strategies for successful school performance.

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Teacher Survey

1- Describe the educational facility in which you work._____

_____

_____

2- What is your current position?_____

3- Describe your interaction with students in school._____

_____

4- Describe briefly your school program._____

_____

5- Do you now or have you ever had a patient who was truant prior to placement at your facility & who continued to miss school once admitted?

_____

6- What strategies have you employed to encourage this student (these students) to attend school?_____

_____

_____

_____

7- Which of these strategies have been successful?_____

_____

8- Have you worked with students who are highly unmotivated?_____

9- What strategies have you employed to increase the motivational level of these students._____

_____

_____

10- What teaching techniques do you currently use to improve reading level?_____

_____

_____

11- What general suggestions would you make for teaching emotionally disturbed students?_____

_____

_____

Proposal Survey Number 2

1- What is your title?_____ 68

2- Do you interact with residents in school?_____

If yes, please describe this interaction; specifically what is your role with residents in school?_____

_____

_____

3- Have you witnessed students who are disruptive or unmotivated in school here?

If yes, please describe the behaviors of these students._____

_____

_____

4- What is the usual intervention employed by staff when a patient becomes disruptive?_____

5- Is this intervention successful in many cases? Please comment._____

_____

6- Do the students with whom you work ever refuse to attend school?_____

If yes, what is the standard procedure to motivate these residents to attend school?

_____

7- If you were in charge of the school, what would you do to improve the attendance, motivation, and behavior of students in school? List as many as you like.

_____

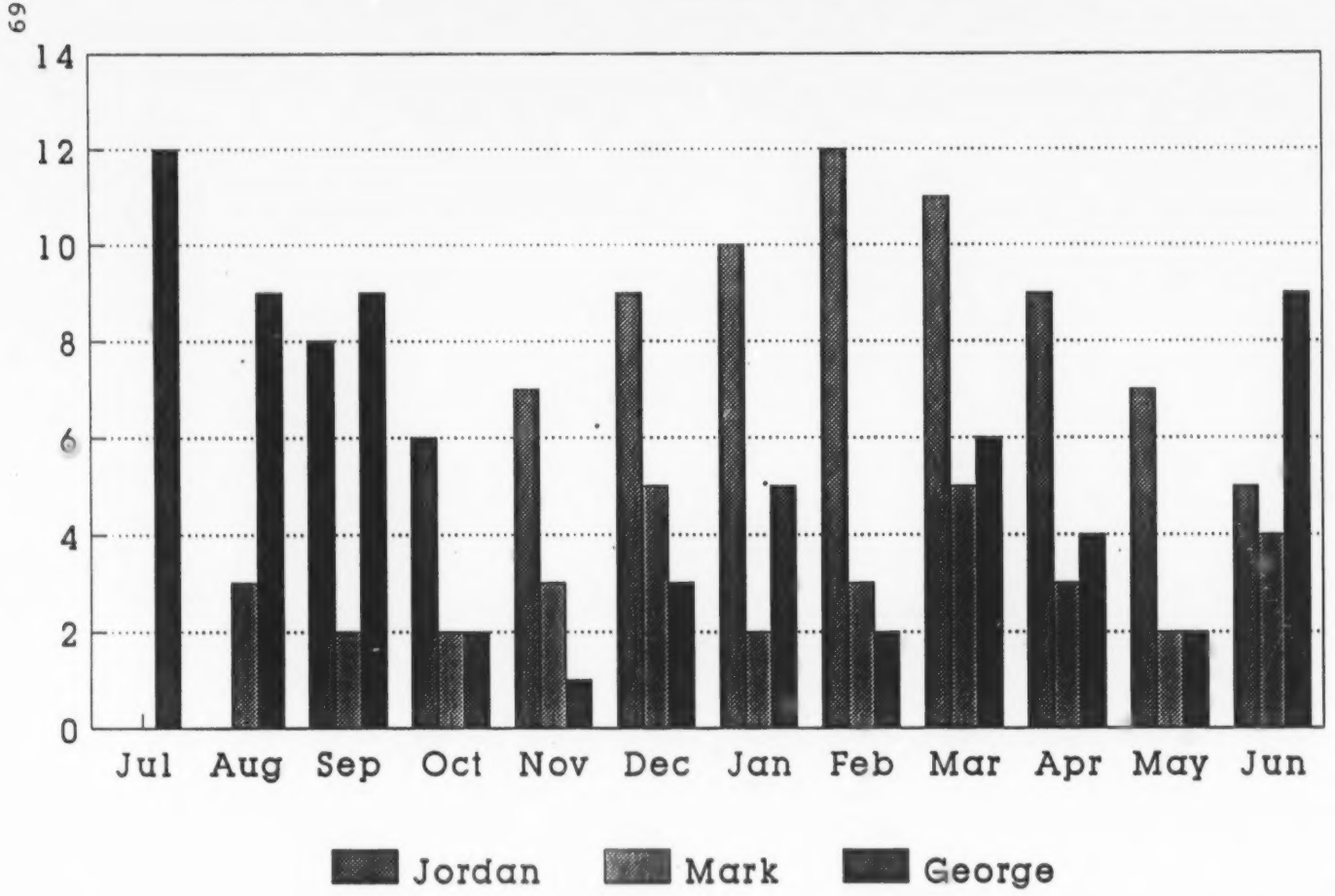
_____

_____

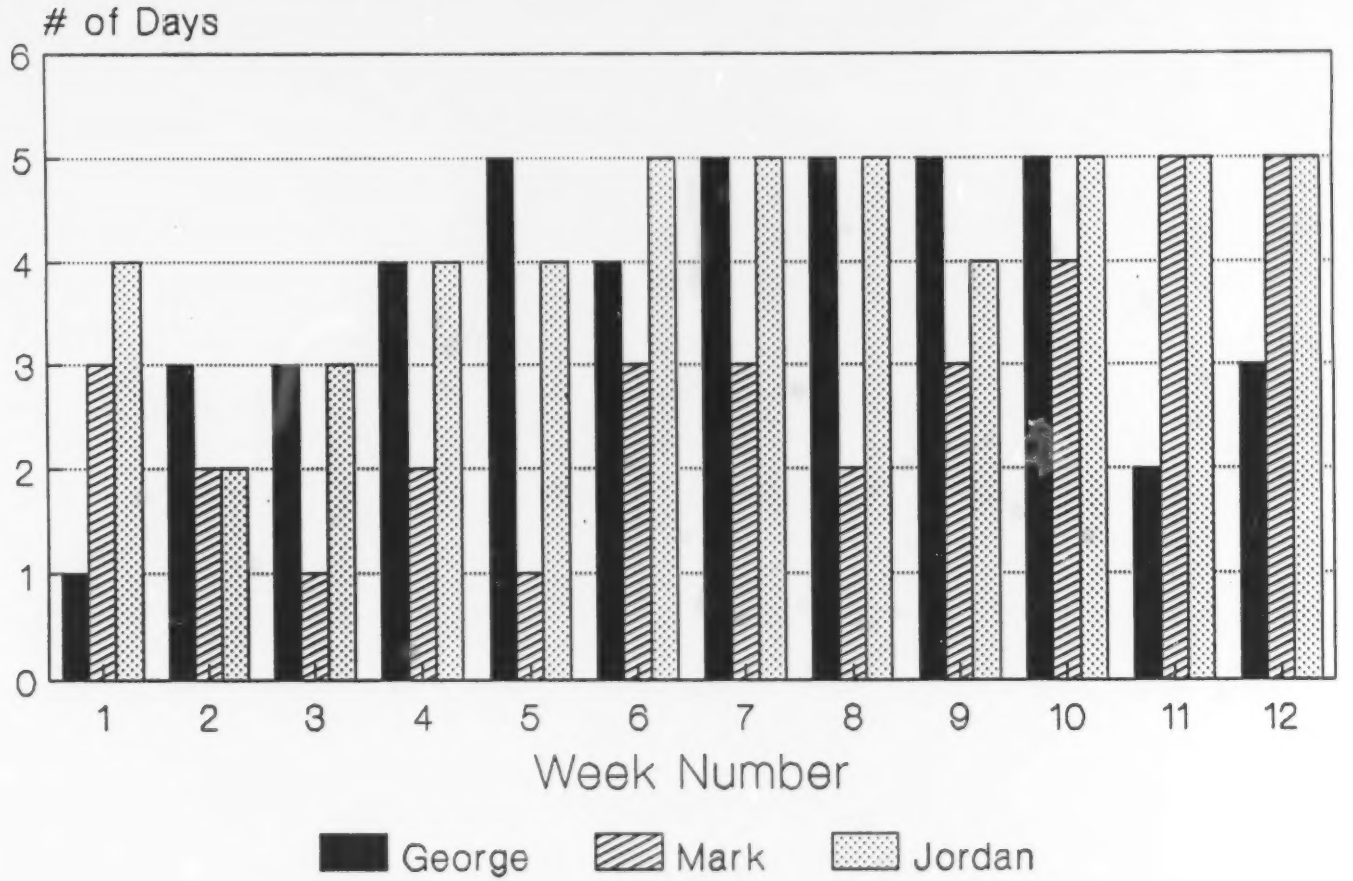
8- Circle the following behaviors that you believe create the greatest problem for staff in school:

motivation	attention	rejection of authorit
truancy	impulsivity	lack of energy/sleepi
verbal acting-out	ignoring directions	hyperactivity

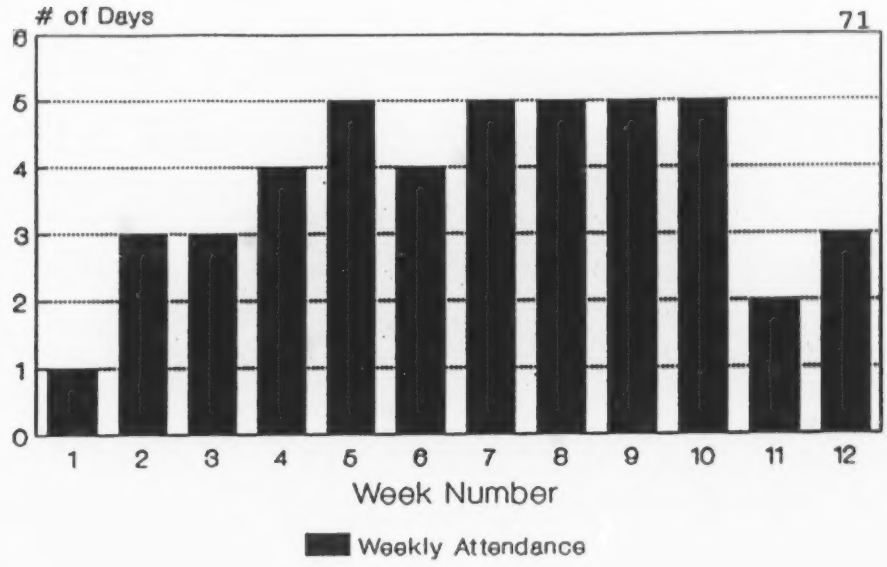
School Attendance

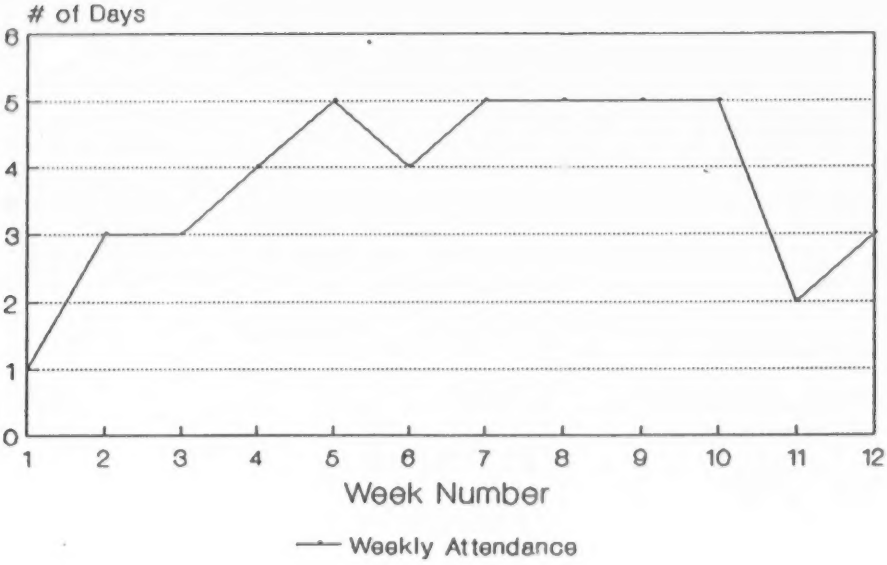


Attendance Comparison

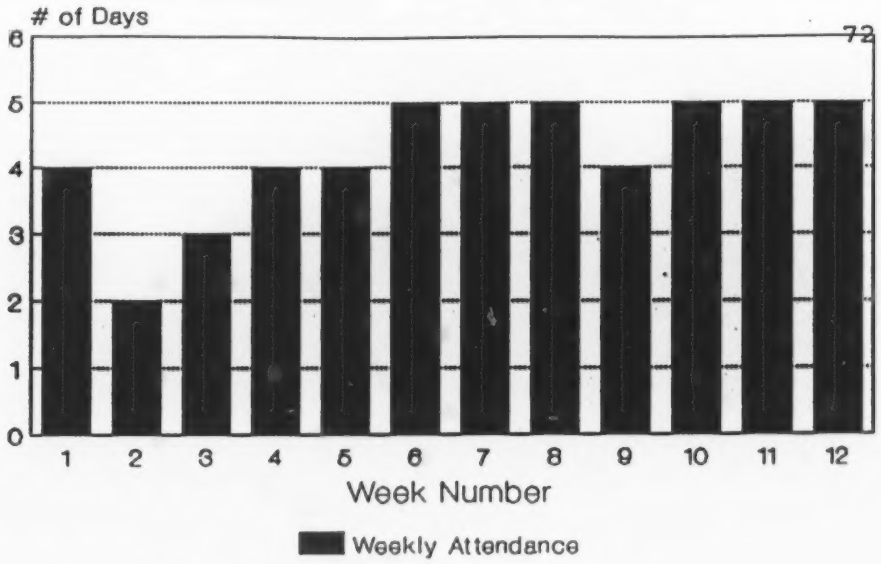


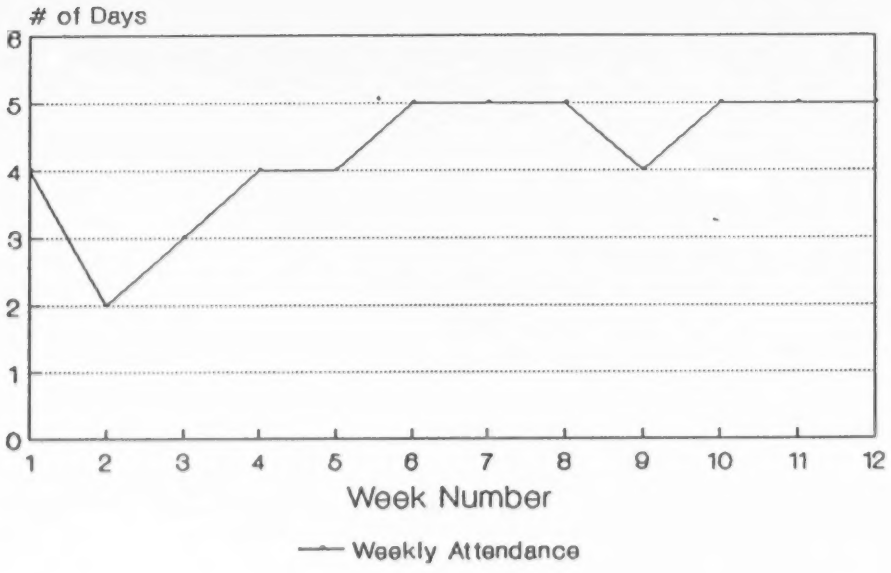
George's Attendance



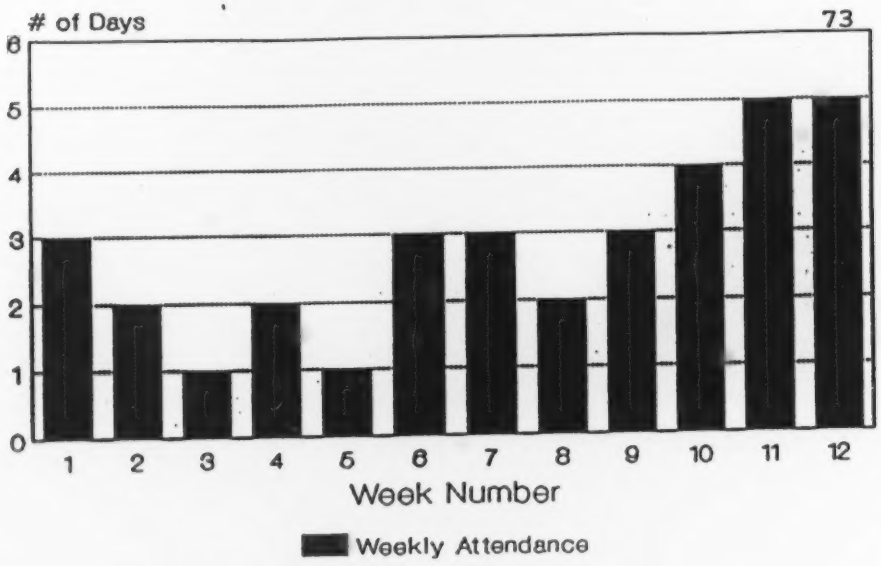


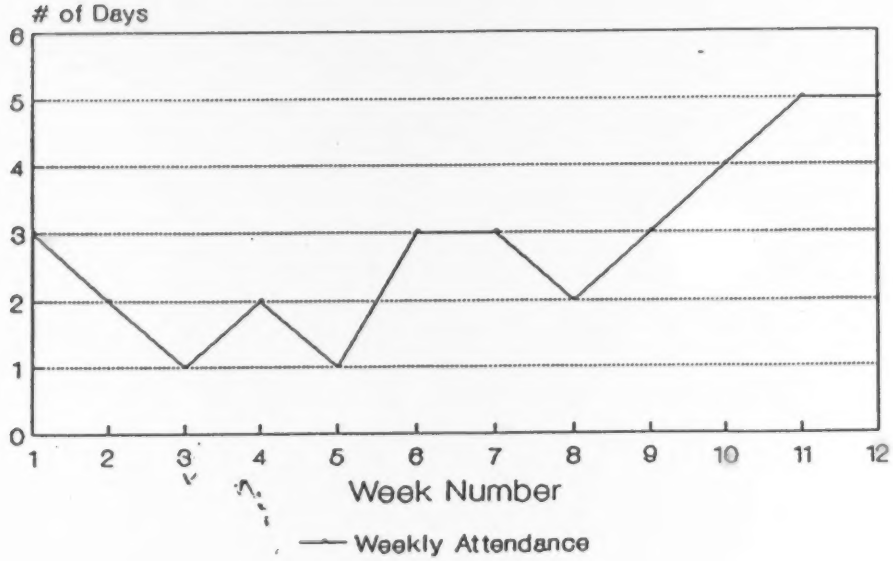
Jordan's Attendance





Mark's Attendance





DATE: _____ WEEK: _____

GOALS

PERIOD	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
#1					
#2					
#3					
FUN					

REWARDS:
Daily:

Weekly:

Monthly: